



STEERING COMMITTEE

Thursday, May 21, 2015

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

MPRB Headquarters

Meeting Notes

Committee members present: Deepak Advani, Jay Cowles, David Hile, Richard Mammen, Nancy Nasi, Neil Reardon, Paul Reyelts, Jamie Schumacher, Philip Schwartz, Carletta Sweet, Dave Tinjum, Ted Tucker, Jo Vos, Sally Westby, Craig Wilson

Committee members excused: Nick Cichowicz, Steve Cramer, Joanne Kaufman, David Wilson
[Please see [website](#) for Steering Committee Member affiliations]

Guests: Paul Forsline, Meg Forney, Tom Whitlock sitting in for Joanne Kaufman

Staff/consultants present: Lydia Major, Kjersti Monson, Colleen O'Dell, Tyler Pederson, Jennifer Ringold, Lacy Shelby, Marsha Wagner, Sarah Weeks, Bruce Chamberlain

1. Welcome/Introductions of New Participants

The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Jennifer Ringold, Deputy Superintendent, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). Jennifer introduced Kjersti Monson, Director, Long Range Planning, Minneapolis, and other members of the project team who were present at the meeting (Park Board, City staff and consultants from LHB). She added that a new team member has been added: Bruce Chamberlain, as a Parks Fellow with the Minneapolis Parks Foundation. Jennifer then invited Tom Whitlock from Damon Farber, sitting in for Joanne Kaufman representing the Warehouse District Business Association, to introduce himself to the group. There were no other new members present.

Jennifer said that the intent of this meeting and ongoing discussions with members of the SC throughout the summer and fall is to make sure they are well-informed so they can help communicate about the projects to their constituencies. It will also serve to inform them who they should forward questions to as they enter into community engagement.

2. Project Identity and Coordination – Vision

Jennifer invited Kjersti to jointly announce that a logo, as evidenced on signs and meeting materials, has been chosen to represent this initiative: “Pathways to Places – Shaping Downtown Together.” It will be used on all communications moving forward.

Jennifer and Kjersti agreed that the work they have done together and separately over the past several months will be mutually beneficial, but as they move forward with their respective projects which involve different deliverables they will be reaching out to people in slightly different ways.

3. Downtown Public Realm Framework Plan (Streets and Plazas)

Kjersti said the city’s plan involves public right-of-way. In addition to unpacking what has been learned through SC and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings, city staff has been mapping the entire system of small area plan priorities. [\[PPT Page 5\]](#) This work has been a huge step forward in understanding the underlying desires at the local scale, and putting all of them on the same map using the same lexicon.

Kjersti invited Lacy Shelby, Principal Urban Designer, Minneapolis CPED, to present on the Small Area Plans (SAP) for specific parks. Lacy said they analyzed information gleaned from TAC and SC members combined with priorities that were previously identified from the early 2000s to 2014, making sure they were included along with the needs of the specific neighborhoods.

[[PPT Pages 6-10](#)] Lacy briefly reviewed several proposed SAPs, highlighting some key points:

- Loring Park: Harmon Place, Yale Place and Grant Street connectivity; improved access to the proposed Southwest LRT station and Cedar Lake Trail
- Downtown West: Incorporating Fifth Street streetscape with LRT corridor, connecting to the stadiums; focusing on improved signage and wayfinding
- North Loop: Identifying more connectivity to the river; improved walking environment; emphasizing Seventh Street as a pedestrian-bike-auto corridor that connects to downtown core, especially as Metro Transit begins to develop its master plan for the Heywood facility; development around proposed soccer stadium
- Downtown East: Eleventh Street connectivity; reinforcing Chicago Avenue as a valued corridor; Portland Avenue potentially emerging as a residential corridor
- Elliot Park: Stronger connections to the river; link more broadly each of the surrounding neighbors into one large downtown neighborhood

Lacy also mentioned that the Protected Bikeways Plan [Map, [PPT Page 11](#)] will start to interact with these long-range planning priorities, which will have a significant impact in the short-term. The map shows existing protected bikeways; the rest of the plan will be rolled out in phases, some to be implemented in the next couple of years, some by the year 2020, and others in 2020 or beyond. She also referenced Access Minneapolis [Map, [PPT Page 12](#)], noting that the map shows the foundational pieces that are informing how the city is moving forward, including what improvements have been identified, what has already been achieved, and what might need to be reevaluated.

Kjersti reviewed the findings that resulted from earlier meetings with both the SC and TAC, where priority corridors were identified. She also reviewed the three constituency groups the SC and TAC identified: residents, visitors and workers. During previous SC and TAC meetings, these groups mapped paths which the City mapped in a computer program and overlaid to demonstrate overlaps among the user groups. This work resulted in framework plans showing corridors for each group. [Maps, [PPT Pages 14-16](#)] (The yellow corridors shown are common to all three maps and are the direct result of the mapping exercises with both the SC and TAC as common priorities, with specific constituent priorities for each group color-coded.)

The project team, working with MPRB and city staff, identified consensus priorities, contextual elements and proposed connections to create a whole, connected system. This work revealed that there is a legible path connecting the downtown neighborhoods and extending across the river. [Maps, [PPT Pages 17-19](#)] They analyzed SAPs to determine how they interact with adopted policy, and broke it down into three major desires: green streets, circulation, and desired connectivity. [Maps, [PPT Pages 20-22](#)] These framework plans will help identify near-term priorities versus what might take longer and/or depend upon incoming developers. (The asterisks on the maps indicate development opportunities.)

Kjersti mentioned some key observations:

- We've taken an important step to round out our baseline by analyzing and aggregating all of the adopted SAP priorities into a unified underlying detailed framework
- From this tighter network of local priorities, we will begin to surface a higher level major network
- We've observed that there are pieces missing in the underlying neighborhood level policy

- Growth has expanded the sense of where downtown's "edges" are, and the framework should reflect that

Kjersti added that there are gaps in the current plan, and they will be looking at more thoughtful connectivity as the area's borders extend beyond downtown to the West Loop, North Minneapolis, Cedar Riverside, and across the river. She then reminded the SC members what the city's deliverables are at the end of this process [[PPT Pages 24-32](#)]:

- Physical Framework Plan
- Development Guidelines
- Enhancement Toolkit
- Event Programming Guide
- Integrated Modes Guidelines
- Implementation Guide

There will be a lot of attention and focus on the top three. For the bottom three, values and principles will be communicated and the inventory provided to groups who want to use it, like the Minneapolis Downtown Council and Meet Minneapolis, which is in initial discussions about creating a tourist master plan.

Kjersti said that they would be working on the enhancement toolkit next. They have looked at peer cities, and will consider unique operating entities, dedicated revenues, and enabling strategies like permits and programs. This year they intend to complete the physical framework plan and policy guidelines and recommendations which will probably require future policy action. The implementation guide will likely be a series of recommendations.

4. Downtown Service Area Master Plan (Parks and Trails)

Jennifer said that at the end of this process they will have individual Park Master Plans for all existing parks within the downtown area, and will also have a good idea where to site new parks and what they should contain. She quickly provided an update on MPRB work to date, including completing park assessments and developing a community engagement plan in coordination with other MPRB projects. They also had a charette with the design team where they determined what they do know and what they don't know, which will lead into the large group exercise at this meeting.

One main area of focus is to build out the user profiles of the individuals who will be using the downtown parks. The main groups are residents, visitors and workers, but there are subsets of these groups that might be slightly nuanced ("personas") with different needs, habits, interests and required infrastructure.

Jennifer recapped what has been accomplished so far. Following SC Meeting #1 they created a robust community engagement plan which is now being implemented. At SC Meeting #2 a search area map was created so MPRB knows which areas to target for parks and trails within downtown. At SC Meeting #3 the focus was on existing and future programs and activities which were put into a matrix that identifies existing facilities by parks within and adjacent to downtown. Another matrix will be created with ideas from this group for future parks.

The next step will be community engagement, creating awareness and collecting information from people across the city but especially downtown. This has and will continue to be done through stakeholder interviews, focus groups, Mapita (an interactive online tool), intercepts and pop-up meetings, and workshop kits; community meetings will be held later this summer, and charrettes and workshops will be conducted in September-October. The final report is due in December.

At the July SC meeting, they will be looking for input from SC members on overarching principles, vision and ideas to be used for the neighborhood park master planning meetings.

5. Report on Community Engagement Process

Downtown Public Realm Framework Engagement (Streets and Plazas)

Lacy talked about focus groups conducted by the city around the topics of policies and challenges that the user groups faced. The findings were summarized by all three groups plus developers. [[PPT Pages 39-40](#)] A couple of items were specifically noted:

- Perceived distances to named destinations (the river, certain parks) are too far, which may result in policy development that might inform next steps in terms of wayfinding or a more legible experience
- Impact of changing streetscape on existing development opportunities and property values
- What areas seem more desirable to investors downtown

A recent focus group with a small group of residents resulted in an increased awareness of neighborhood identities, along with the importance of feeling safe and creating opportunities for social interaction. Interviews have been conducted with some existing downtown developers to direct creation of development guidelines. Developers want to make additional investments in the public realm; they just need to know how, and how much money it will require. Additional mechanisms are needed to accomplish this.

The city has engaged an artist and graphic designer, Stephanie Glaros. She will collect stories and feedback from individuals through video, photography and audio on how they use public space and the public realm.

The city's community engagement process involves presenting at community advisory commissions, meeting with city council members to discuss specific policy ideas, attending open streets events and engaging at different farmers markets. [[PPT Page 42](#)]

Kjersti reviewed the next steps for developing the Downtown Public Realm Framework:

- Through ongoing engagement, define the next iteration of the Physical Framework
- Define and depict draft Development Guidelines
- Conduct outreach on Enhancement Toolkit
- Continue to engage jointly with MPRB on qualitative and system goals

Downtown Service Area Master Plan Community Engagement (Parks and Trails)

Lydia Major, Landscape Architect, LHB, referenced the updated version of the Dashboard that was previously distributed which is used by the MPRB to track the progress of community engagement against its original goals.

Focus groups and stakeholder interviews have been conducted by MPRB. [[PPT Pages 45-46](#)] Lydia highlighted a few items that speak to the overall feedback:

- Broad ideas about sense of community
- Distributing resources
- Need for more restrooms and seating
- More opportunities for play
- More opportunities for diverse communities to use gathering places in different ways

- Make sure parks celebrate their ecological and historical context and feel integrated with neighborhood

A request was made for clarification about the finding that “skyways are both an important part of winter life downtown and a detriment to street life in the summer.” Lydia responded that it came up in a couple of different focus groups, around development and work life; some thought having skyways split the audience, taking away from the street life. Other comments were complimentary, with the idea that skyways are an integral part of downtown. They are often used as “extended hallways” which are sometimes a quicker way to get from one point to another than going outdoors.

Lydia encouraged SC members to spread the word about [Mapita](#), which will be used to capture geographic information about the downtown system: where people are, where they want to be, and what they want in their parks. She then referenced the Community Engagement Tool Kit which describes four different kinds of engagement opportunities for SC members to use:

- One-on-one interviews with stakeholders
- Intercept events
- Small group discussions
- Short meeting presentations

A list was provided of scheduled events throughout the summer. This is a living document, and SC members were encouraged to contribute to it if they know of other events being held. Engagement sign-up cards were distributed to SC members to be used to indicate which activities they might be interested in participating, the date of the activity, which engagement tool(s) would be used, and what type of support they might need from the project team. This will also be sent to SC members in an email so they can continue to be involved in community engagement with their constituencies, augmenting what is being done by MPRB. Jennifer said that the information gathered will eventually be used to set key themes and visions for the downtown area.

Lydia talked about the value of having a Parks Fellow on the project team, stating that Bruce Chamberlain has helped them focus on understanding users to determine how and why a park should be designed a certain way. The project approach structure is:

- Understanding who we are looking at
- What their habits and interests would be
- Understanding the activities that they should support
- Understanding the landscape and topology, leading to development of systems, patterns/layout, implementation strategies/toolkit and design character/concept design

Bruce added that it is important to understand in a very in-depth way the people who do or want to use parks downtown and transform the landscape for a broad spectrum of people, developing landscape typologies and understanding if they will/will not satisfy the interests of the people actually using them. Gaps in the current landscape will be identified, testing the quality of work halfway through the process so the gaps can be filled.

A comment was made commending the project team for looking at users, but questions were asked about whether they were also looking at people who are not using parks, why they are not, and how they could be made to feel more welcome. Lydia replied that yes, they were looking at both users and non-users, attempting to understand and reduce barriers for non-users.

Referencing resident, visitor and worker user group maps that were developed from information provided by TAC and SC members [[PPT Pages 52-54](#)], Lydia introduced the detailed set of personas that was developed [[PPT Page 55](#)]:

- 7 Residents (including under-represented populations): teen residents (one boy, one girl), resident with a disability, working low-income resident with children, senior resident, parent resident, single adult resident, homeless resident
- 3 Visitors/Tourists: tourist, fly-in visitor, drive-in recreational day visitor
- 2 Downtown Workers: daytime worker, evening/shift worker

Lydia added that these are broad categories; in describing the personas they tried to be inclusive and nuanced. The questions included in the Engagement Toolkit will help the project team to better understand the needs of these personas.

6. Large Group Discussion: Solving for “Who?”

Lydia introduced the large group discussion by asking for additional feedback on the following questions:

- Do the proposed user groups include most users we anticipate for downtown? Which are duplicative? Which are missing?
- What type of park user do you think is most often overlooked downtown?
- What approach would work best to reach these users?
- What habits and interests do you think would be different for these users?

The topic of user groups led to extensive discussion, with many questions and comments from SC members. “Recreational” instead of “drive-in recreational day” visitor was suggested to include/reach visitors who might bike into downtown. The large population of empty nesters living downtown was included in the senior resident population, age 55+. Some SC members thought the general categories could be broken down into subcategories within each group; others saw the value in leaving them more general. Some specific groups were mentioned that were not clearly included, i.e. MTCT students, teens, daycare and school groups, young married couples.

Lydia explained that the project team started with a much larger group but determined that when they got too specific they became too individual. They recognized that they couldn’t include everyone, and looked at how the personas overlapped. She said this was all great feedback, and perhaps the project team needs to be more explicit and shape the categories a little differently. Jennifer added that this exchange led directly into the large group exercise.

A question was asked about the U.S. census, wondering if the project team started from a demographic perspective. There are many residents in the 30s and 50s-70s age groups, so should more residents be allocated to those populations, then break it down by income? Lydia replied that the project team started with demographic data, then focused on the samples they had the most information about at this time as referenced on the community engagement dashboard.

Jennifer offered some things to think about when determining whether or not to add specific user groups:

- Do they have different needs, habits or interests than existing user groups?
- Are there different needs, habits or interests by race and/or ethnicity?

The category of “Single Adult” was discussed extensively. Several committee members suggested that it would be worth exploring that category in more details, perhaps expanding or refining it.

When asked how the information gathered through community engagement will be used, Lydia replied that by thoroughly understanding these groups the project team will be able to design parks and public spaces that will be responsive. They will develop descriptions that cover most of the nuances, overlaps and differences, and they will look at habits and interests that affect how parks and public spaces are used. This will be tied into the matrix introduced previously, which will look at different activities in existing and proposed parks and how activities are distributed across the system. Using that information they will be able to develop a master plan for each park that makes sense given these factors.

Referencing the seven resident user groups, a question was asked about whether each group would have equal say or if they will be weighted. Jennifer replied that information gathered by SC members will help them populate the dashboard and make recommendations for existing and proposed parks. At that point they will seek additional feedback from the SC on creating spaces to accommodate different user groups, based on demographics or future plans. Lydia added that the project team recognizes that some of the personas are inhabited by very large populations, but in some cases designing to the needs of a specific demographic isn't necessarily exclusive; i.e., a good design for a specific minority population doesn't conflict with the needs of the community.

Different groups that occasionally use downtown parks were mentioned: church members who might drive in from the metro area, wedding and prom photos in Loring Park and the Sculpture Garden, South Asians playing cricket in Loring Park, other international groups. One SC member said it would be helpful at the next meeting to present scenarios of what the future might entail, i.e. the increasing East African population, climate change. Kjersti said the city is currently working on that in conjunction with the Met Council, pulling data on housing, economic and demographic trends. MPRB's study will be helpful in determining a downtown strategy and how the city thinks about neighborhoods, amenities and development. MPRB is focused on people, and the city is focused on policy. What MPRB is doing will inform what the city is doing, and vice versus. Jennifer added that both documents will shape the next generation of the city.

Jennifer asked SC members to identify any other groups that might have been overlooked. Several were mentioned: non-users, including residents and tourists; night-time visitors; local residents that bike, walk or use transit; non-individual users, groups of children or adults; seniors group broken down by household income, diversity; gay (or other identity) population.

One SC member said he likes the idea of income, race, all of that being infused in these categories instead of adding fifty more categories. Kjersti mentioned the danger of getting into stereotypical assumptions, and Jennifer agreed that in developing the user groups they were concerned with stereotyping.

Regarding the use of parks by night-time visitors, a question was asked if there was opportunity for a 24-hour user. Jennifer replied that currently the parks close at midnight and open at sunrise, and suggested that the city might be interested in accommodating a 24-hour user. Kjersti said that one of the Minneapolis Downtown Council's committees had discussed a night-time plan, and that perhaps there could be a piece of the city could be identified that would be more highly lit. Jennifer added that MPRB and the city would work together on this. Members of the design team agreed it would be a good topic to discuss further.

Jennifer summarized the large group discussion on user groups by saying that the project team will work more on:

- Adding inclusivity to the groups
- Night time use
- Recreational use – whether it is specific to day/evening activities
- Single adult – household with/without children

7. Public Comment

Jennifer asked if any guests wanted to take advantage of the public comment period. Paul Forsline, City of Skate, wanted to make sure equity was being addressed.

8. Upcoming Activities/Adjourn

Jennifer said that the materials distributed at the meeting, including the engagement card information, would be sent to SC members electronically.

Kjersti added that the city's work on physical framework, development guidelines and enhancement toolkit involves a different outreach, how to build constituencies around policy changes. They will be talking with policy makers and others to vet issues with people who would be impacted. She invited any SC members with a stake in that who would like to be a part of that conversation to contact her or Lacy.

The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be on July 16, with an additional meeting scheduled for August 20.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

This constitutes my understanding of items discussed and decisions reached.

If there are any omissions or discrepancies, please notify the author in writing.

Submitted by:

Marsha Wagner, CastleVisions

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